

FROM THE BOOKSHELF #136
ROGER LYONS

APRIL 13, 1976

THE NEW COLUMBIA ENCYCLOPEDIA

ANNCR: THE VOICE OF AMERICA BRINGS YOU NOW ANOTHER IN THE WEEKLY SERIES....FROM THE BOOKSHELF... A SERIES IN WHICH WE REPORT ON SOME OF THE MANY BOOKS AMERICANS ARE CURRENTLY READING. TODAY ROGER LYONS' REPORT ON "THE NEW COLUMBIA ENCYCLOPEDIA," PUBLISHED BY THE COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS. HERE IS _____.

EDITOR: NINETEEN SEVENTY-FOUR WITNESSED THE PUBLICATION OF THE FIFTEENTH EDITION OF THE "ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA," PROBABLY THE BEST KNOWN OF ALL ENCYCLOPEDIAS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE. ITS THIRTY VOLUMES, COSTING HUNDREDS OF DOLLARS, FOLLOW THEIR PREDECESSORS AS A MASTERPIECE OF SCHOLARSHIP. BUT THE BRITANNICA'S HIGHLY COMPLICATED ORGANIZATION OFTEN MAKES IT DIFFICULT FOR THE LAYMAN TO QUICKLY FIND THE INFORMATION HE WANTS AND ITS VERY ERUDITION MAY DISCOURAGE THE BROWSER.

BY WAY OF CONTRAST, THE FOURTH EDITION OF THE ONE-VOLUME "COLUMBIA ENCYCLOPEDIA" WAS PUBLISHED IN 1975, AND FOR THE AVERAGE EDUCATED PERSON WHO WANTS READABLE INFORMATION QUICKLY, THE FORMAT OF "THE NEW COLUMBIA ENCYCLOPEDIA" IS SUPERIOR. UNLESS ONE IS A MEMBER OF THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY AND NEEDS THE DEPTH THAT A LARGER ENCYCLOPEDIA PROVIDES, THIS ONE-VOLUME,

EDITOR: THREE-THOUSAND PAGE TONE WILL FIT THE GENERAL NEEDS
(CONT'D) OF MOST FAMILIES.

IS YOUR INTEREST AN UNFAMILIAR NAME FROM THE REMOTE
PAST OR ONE AS RECENT AS 1974? IS SOME HISTORICAL
REFERENCE YOU HAVE BEEN READING ABOUT UNKNOWN OR
UNCLEAR? OR ARE YOU SEARCHING FOR SOME NOT-TOO-
TECHNICAL PIECE OF INFORMATION IN THE ARTS OR SCIENCES?
THE CHANCES ARE VERY GOOD THAT AT LEAST SOME BASIC
AND VALUABLE INFORMATION WILL BE OFFERED BY THIS WORK.
AND FOR THOSE WHOSE APPETITE IS WHETTED TO SEEK MORE
INFORMATION, A SHORT BIBLIOGRAPHY AND CROSS-REFERENCES
APPENDED TO THE ARTICLE WILL LEAD FURTHER.

THE LAST EDITION OF THE "COLUMBIA ENCYCLOPEDIA" WAS ISSUED
IN 1950. ONE OF THE MANY DELIGHTS OF THIS NEWEST
EDITION IS ITS COVERAGE OF THE DIZZY PACE OF EVENTS
IN THE LAST GENERATION. FEW NAMES WHICH HAVE COME
INTO PROMINENCE ARE MISSED. THERE'S INDIRA GANDHI,
GERALD FORD, AND WERNER HEISENBERG. FOR THOSE WHO
THIRST AFTER KNOWLEDGE FOR ITS OWN SAKE, THE "NEW
COLUMBIA" MAKES A FASCINATING BEDSIDE COMPANION,
FOR HERE IN THIS ONE REFERENCE BOOK IS A SURVEY OF MAN,
HIS CULTURES AND HIS ENVIRONMENT. / READING IT

BRINGS TO MIND THOSE FAMOUS LINES OF SHAKESPEARE:
"WHAT A PIECE OF WORK IS MAN! HOW NOBLE IN REASON!
HOW INFINITE IN FACULTY!"

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EDITOR:
(CONT'D)

WOULD YOU CARE TO KNOW WHO THE SEVEN SLEEPERS OF
EPHESUS WERE? THE "NEW COLUMBIA" HAS A PARAGRAPH
ON THEM. ARE YOU INTERESTED IN A SUMMARY OF THE
WATERGATE AFFAIR? YOU WILL FIND A CRISP ACCOUNT.
EVERY NAME IN THE BIBLE IS LISTED. YOU MAY NOT CARE
TO KNOW THAT THERE WERE SIX RULERS NAMED FERDINAND THE
FIRST, BUT PERHAPS THE FACT THAT THE NORSE GODDESS
FREYJA RODE IN A CHARIOT DRAWN BY CATS WILL CATCH YOUR
FANCY. OR THAT BEETHOVEN COMPOSED MUSIC FOR THE
MANDOLIN. OR THAT THE ARCTIC TERN MIGRATES ALL THE
WAY FROM THE ARCTIC TO THE ANTARCTIC AND BACK AGAIN.
PERHAPS YOU KNEW ALL THAT. BUT DID YOU KNOW THAT
WHALES, LIKE BATS, USE ECHOES FOR NAVIGATION? AND IF
NONE OF THESE ITEMS CATCHES YOUR FANCY, JUST TURN A
FEW PAGES; YOU ARE SURE TO FIND SOMETHING.

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OF COURSE, IF YOU'RE AN EXPERT IN SOME FIELD, YOU CAN
ALWAYS NIT-PICK. REVIEWERS LOVE TO INDULGE IN THAT
SPECIAL KIND OF SNOBBERY THAT CITES MISSING NAMES,
SNEERS AT DEFINITIONS THAT DON'T PLEASE THEM AND POINTS
UP CONTRADICTIONS AND OTHER INADEQUACIES THAT ARE
SURE TO BE THERE. BUT WE WILL REFRAIN FROM THAT
TEMPTATION.

"THE NEW COLUMBIA ENCYCLOPEDIA," BEING AN AMERICAN
PUBLICATION, NATURALLY ADDRESSES ITSELF MOST DIRECTLY
TO ENGLISH-SPEAKING READERS, BUT IN THIS EDITION IT
HAS CONSCIOUSLY EXPANDED ITS INTERNATIONAL COVERAGE.

EDITOR: IT INTRODUCES US TO THE WORLD AND THE UNIVERSE, AND,
(CONT'D) LIKE ALL GOOD INTRODUCTIONS, TELLS A GREAT DEAL
BRIEFLY AND ENCOURAGES US TO LEARN MORE. / THOSE OF

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YOU TO WHOM IT IS INACCESSIBLE MIGHT TRY YOUR NEAREST U.S.
INFORMATION SERVICE LIBRARY.

ANNCR: YOU HAVE BEEN LISTENING TO THE WEEKLY VOICE OF AMERICA
SERIES, FROM THE BOOKSHELF, WHICH REPORTS ON BOOKS
AMERICANS ARE READING. TODAY'S SELECTION WAS "THE
NEW COLUMBIA ENCYCLOPEDIA." JOIN US NEXT ----- (AT
THIS TIME) FOR ANOTHER SELECTION... FROM THE BOOKSHELF.

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WJL/CAK